Coordinates: 42.5313609°N 70.8913727°W

The Satanic Temple

The Satanic Temple is a nontheistic religious group based in United States.[1][2][3][4] The Temple is recognized as a church for the purposes of tax exemption,[5] with chapters in 16 US states and 1 in Canada.[6] The group uses Satanic imagery to promote egalitarianism, social justice, and the separation of church and state. Their stated mission is "to encourage benevolence and empathy among all people". The group was co-founded by Lucien Greaves, the organization's spokesperson, and Malcolm Jarry.[7] The Satanic Temple has utilized satire, theatrical ploys, humor, and direct legal action in their public campaigns to "generate attention and prompt people to reevaluate fears and perceptions", and to "highlight religious hypocrisy and encroachment on religious freedom".[8][9][10]

The organization actively participates in public affairs that have manifested in several public political actions and efforts at lobbying,[11][12] with a focus on the separation of church and state and using satire against Christian privilege that it says interferes with personal religious freedom. It considers marriage a religious sacrament that should be governed under the First Amendment's protection of religious liberty, and which should prevail over state laws.[13] Because the group regards inviolability of the body as a key doctrine, it also views all restrictions on abortion, including mandatory waiting periods, as an infringement on the rights of Satanists to practice their religion.[14] The Satanic Temple does not believe in a supernatural Satan. The Temple uses the literary Satan as a metaphor to promote pragmatic skepticism, rational reciprocity, personal autonomy, and curiosity.[7] Satan is thus used as a symbol representing "the eternal rebel" against arbitrary authority and social norms.[15][16]

The Satanic Temple	
Abbreviation	TST
Type	Satanic religion, social movement, advocacy group, protest group
Orientation	Activism, protest, lobbying
Spokesperson	Lucien Greaves
Region	International
Headquarters	United States
Founder	Lucien Greaves Malcolm Jarry
Origin	2013
Tax status	U.S. IRS 501(c)(3)
Official website	thesatanictemple.com (https://thesatanictemple.com/)

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History

In an interview with *The New York Times*, co-founder Malcolm Jarry stated that the idea of starting a Satanic faith-based organization was first conceived as one "that met all the Bush administration's criteria for receiving funds, but was repugnant to them". The idea was inspired by then–president George W. Bush's formation of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, for which he thought something should be done to counter it.[7] The Satanic Temple was founded in 2013.[17][7][3] On April 25, 2019, the Temple announced it had been granted tax exempt status after being formally recognized as a church by the Internal Revenue Service.[18]

Mission

The Satanic Temple describes its mission as follows:

> The mission of The Satanic Temple is to encourage benevolence and empathy among all people, reject tyrannical authority, advocate practical common sense and justice, and be directed by the human conscience to undertake noble pursuits guided by the individual will. Politically aware, Civic-minded Satanists and allies in The Satanic Temple have publicly opposed The Westboro Baptist Church, advocated on behalf of children in public school to abolish corporal punishment, applied for equal representation where religious monuments are placed on public property, provided religious exemption and legal protection against laws that unscientifically restrict women's reproductive autonomy, exposed fraudulent

> harmful pseudo-scientific practitioners and claims in mental health care, and applied to hold clubs alongside other religious after school clubs in schools besieged by proselytizing organizations.[19]

Tenets

The Satanic Temple has seven fundamental tenets:

> 1. One should strive to act with compassion and empathy towards all creatures in accordance with reason.
> 2. The struggle for justice is an ongoing and necessary pursuit that should prevail over laws and institutions.
> 3. One's body is inviolable, subject to one's own will alone.
> 4. The freedoms of others should be respected, including the freedom to offend. To willfully and unjustly encroach upon the freedoms of another is to forgo your own.
> 5. Beliefs should conform to our best scientific understanding of the world. We should take care never to distort scientific facts to fit our beliefs.
> 6. People are fallible. If we make a mistake, we should do our best to rectify it and resolve any harm that may have been caused.
> 7. Every tenet is a guiding principle designed to inspire nobility in action and thought. The spirit of compassion, wisdom, and justice should always prevail over the written or spoken word.[20]

The tenets have been considered morally superior to the Ten Commandments of the Hebrew Bible.[21]

Campaigns

Individual chapters hold gatherings with rituals and activities designed to highlight and push back against the right-wing religious establishment and archaic traditions and norms. For example, one group in Detroit held a gathering that included dance music, a porn room, "surprisingly good hors d'oeuvres", and "a statue that's either a penis and testicles or a woman gazing into a mirror, depending on your point of view", and a wine ceremony involving three naked participants.[22] The Satanic Temple has taken part in several public activities that have been the focus of public scrutiny.

Lucien Greaves, spokesperson for The Satanic Temple, at SASHAcon, March 2016

Grey Faction

The Grey Faction is a project of The Satanic Temple with the goal of exposing malpractice and pseudoscience associated with Satanic ritual abuse conspiracy theories. The Grey Faction protests medical conferences, initiates legal action, and petitions medical boards. The faction has protested conferences held by the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation, which advocates for the

discredited practice of recovered-memory therapy.[23][24][25] The group has also petitioned for investigation into the killing by Gigi Jordan of her child, which was connected to the discredited practice of facilitated communication.[26][27]

Prayer in schools

The organization first gained media attention in January 2013 after a group of Satanists assembled at the Florida State Capitol to show their approval over a bill Governor Rick Scott signed into law the prior year, Senate Bill 98, which allowed student-led prayer at school assemblies.[8] The group further stated that as the bill did not specify a religion, the prayers could be led by a student from any religion—including Satanism. The TST members announced they "were coming out to say how happy we were because now our Satanic children could pray to Satan in school."[17][7][3]

"Adopt-a-highway" campaign

One of the projects launched by The Satanic Temple was an attempt to raise enough money to "adopt-a-highway" in New York City. The adopt-a-highway program would have involved the group to maintain and beautify part of the public highway for up to two years. Their goal was to raise awareness about religious diversity. The group stated that "The campaign will do more than keep our highways clean. It will help send a clear message to the world reaffirming American Religious Plurality". The group raised just over $2,000 between June 10 and August 15, 2013; short of their goal of $15,000. If their goal had been reached, the New York Department of Transportation would have approved the plan, and the funds would have been put toward the campaign. In the event that the department did not approve the project, the funds were to support contesting that decision. The organization offered different incentive levels for donations, ranging from ten dollars, for which the donor would receive a button, to ten thousand dollars, for which the donor would receive a full "Membership Package", including the ability to choose the location of and to participate in the next Pink Mass that The Satanic Temple performed.

Pink Mass

In July 2013, The Satanic Temple held a "Pink Mass" over the grave of Catherine Johnston, the mother of Westboro Baptist Church founder Fred Phelps.[28] The mass was held after the Westboro Baptist Church announced their intention to picket the funerals of the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing.[29] Queerty.com suggested they had based the idea of the mass on similar activities held by factions of the Latter Day Saint movement, where they would perform proxy baptisms.[28] The Pink Mass was officiated by Greaves and consisted of two gay men kissing over Johnston's grave while Greaves touched the tombstone with his genitals and chanted an incantation intended to change the deceased's sexual orientation.[30][31] A misdemeanor charge was issued against Greaves and he was told that if he returned to Lauderdale County, Mississippi (where Johnston's grave is located), he would be arrested.[31] Shortly before Phelps's death on March 19, 2014, The Satanic Temple expressed interest in holding a similar ceremony for the church founder.[32][33] The Blessing of same-sex marriages is allowed in The Satanic Temple.[34]

Black Mass

In May 2014, a black mass was scheduled to be held by The Satanic Temple at the Harvard University campus, sponsored by the Harvard Extension Cultural Studies Club, but had to be relocated off campus due to significant opposition by Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and school

administrators.[35][36][37]

Baphomet statue

A monumental bronze sculpture depicting Baphomet, the goat-headed, angel-winged occult idol, was crowdfunded in 2014 and unveiled the following year. The statue has figured prominently in challenges regarding the display of the Ten Commandments at the State Capitols of both Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Protect Children Project

The Protect Children Project is an initiative launched by The Satanic Temple in the spring of 2014. The project's aims are stated to offer "First Amendment protection to support children who may be at risk for being subjected to mental or physical abuse in school by teachers and administrators through the use of solitary confinement, restraints, and corporal punishment."[38] The Protect Children Project's website asked participants to print out pre-written letters to send to their respective school boards on a day designated as "Protect Children Day" as a form of protest.[39][40] In March 2017, The Satanic Temple launched an anti-spanking campaign against corporal punishment in schools, as part of the Protect Children Project. They unveiled billboards in Texas which read *"Never be hit in school again. Exercise your religious rights."*[41]

Planned Parenthood protests

On August 22, 2015 the Detroit chapter of The Satanic Temple held a counter-protest outside of a Ferndale Planned Parenthood location in response to anti-abortionist groups that were planning to protest Planned Parenthood on that same date.[42] As part of the protest the Temple held a guerrilla theatre performance that included two men dressed as clergy pouring milk on kneeling actresses.[43] This was not the first protest of this type that the Temple had held in support of the organization, as they had previously held a 2013 protest where they brought children to the Texas State Capitol who chanted "Fuck You" and "Hail Satan", while holding signs reading "Stay Out Of My Mommy's Vagina".[44]

On April 23, 2016, members of the Detroit chapter of the Temple counter protested the Citizens for a Pro-Life Society's protest of Planned Parenthood. Temple members dressed in bondage fetish clothing, wearing baby masks and diapers while engaging in flagellation. The Temple said that the reason for the protest was to "expose the anti-choice protest as an act of fetal idolatry, highlighting the fetishization and abstraction of the 'baby.'"[45]

Muslim refugee activism

In November 2015 the Temple received media attention for offering to take in Muslims or refugees that were afraid of experiencing backlash over the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris.[46][3]

Demonization of Junipero Serra

The Temple's Los Angeles Chapter has also protested the canonization of Junípero Serra by Pope Francis and in October 2015 they held a ceremony where they "demonized" the Christian missionary,[47] stating that Serra helped enslave thousands of Native Americans and that he "also led The Spanish Inquisition in his territories, trying residents of the Missions for the crimes of sorcery, witchcraft and devil worship."[48]

Pentagram Ritual

On June 6, 2016, the Temple performed a Pentagram Ritual[49] around the California city of Lancaster in Los Angeles County, to support California State Senate candidate Steve Hill, who hoped to be the first Satanic Temple member elected to public office.[50] Hill received 13% of the vote, more than one Republican candidate.

After School Satan

After School Satan is an after school program sponsored by The Satanic Temple. It was created in July 2016 as an alternative to the Christian-based after school group called the Good News Club.[51][52][53]

Los Angeles Satanic Mass

On January 14, 2017, a week before the Trump presidential inauguration, the Temple hosted what it billed as the largest Satanic gathering in history, hoping to double the attendance of the 2015 gathering in Detroit for the Baphomet unveiling. Film crews from VICE and NatGeo were on hand to document the event. The mass included three parts: Invocation Ritual, Destruction Ritual and a Bloodletting Ritual.[54] Local Los Angeles media was also on hand to cover the event, calling the event "a bloody good time".[55]

Holiday displays

Chapters throughout the United States have erected various displays to appear adjacent to Christian Nativity scenes on public grounds.[56] A display in the Florida State Capitol rotunda in 2014 featured an angel falling from the sky into a pit of flames,[57] which was vandalized and then modified as a result.[58] That same year a display at the Michigan State Capitol featured the message "The Greatest Gift is Knowledge" and a depiction of a snake wrapped around a black Leviathan cross.[59][60] Sponsored by the Detroit chapter, this "Snaketivity" display returned to Lansing capitol grounds in 2015,[61][62] and again in 2016.[63][64] The Chicago chapter updated "Snaketivity" as a sculpture for display in the Illinois State Capitol rotunda in 2018: with a serpent coiled around a woman's hand presenting an apple, and the message "Knowledge is the Greatest Gift" inscribed on the supporting pedestal;[65][66] the same sculpture returned in 2019.[67] The West Michigan chapter installed a Yule goat outside their state's capitol on the 2019 winter solstice.[68][69]

Tax-exempt status

On April 25, 2019, the Associated Press reported that the Satanic Temple had received tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service, being classified as a "church or a convention or association of churches."[70] The Satanic Temple had previously been reluctant to pursue tax-exempt status until the Johnson Amendment was weakened by an executive order "Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty" signed by President Trump in May 2017.[71] Co-founder Lucien Greaves stated at the time:

> "Another byproduct of this turn of events, of course, is that The Satanic Temple must re-evaluate its prior principled refusal to accept religious tax-exemption. This position now confers a total advantage of “none”, while our theocratic counterparts trample over the Constitution and all it previously stood for. It appears that now is a time in which a more principled stand is to meet our opponent on equal footing, so as to balance, as best we can, what has been a frighteningly asymmetrical battle. As “the religious” are increasingly

> gaining ground as a privileged class, we must ensure that this privilege is available to all, and that superstition doesn't gain exclusive rights over non-theistic religions or non-belief. With the religio-political landscape suddenly so grotesquely deformed from what we previously recognized, it seems reasonable that non-believers should adjust their language accordingly, and insist that atheistic and secular non-profits, advancing a distinct religious opinion and/or opinion upon religion, are themselves rightful beneficiaries of religious tax exemption as well."[72]

Announcing the new tax status, Greaves stated: "In light of theocratic assaults upon the Separation of Church and State in the legislative effort to establish a codified place of privilege for one religious viewpoint, we feel that accepting religious tax exemption — rather than renouncing in protest — can help us to better assert our claims to equal access and exemption while laying to rest any suspicion that we don't meet the qualifications of a true religious organization. Satanism is here to stay."[72]

Scottsdale, Arizona invocation challenge

Scottsdale City Council denied a 2016 request from The Satanic Temple's Arizona chapter to give an invocation at the Council meeting; denial was based on the grounds that only groups with 'substantial connections to the community' are allowed (the pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Scottsdale was selected instead). The Satanic Temple maintains there was never any "local community" question during the application process.[73] The Arizona chapter's co-founder Michelle Shortt filed suit against the city, saying they had 'no written policy regarding prayer and only reversed its decision after backlash from the community and city officials.'[74] The legal battle remains ongoing;[75] the City Council unanimously approved additional funds to litigate a January 2020 federal court trial in Phoenix.[76]

Membership

Membership in The Satanic Temple is free and open to anyone and can be obtained by signing up on the official website.[77] Membership cards can be purchased for $25. Additionally, members can apply to join local chapters, though according to Draco Ignis and Hofman A Turing, members of the NYC chapter, the requirements for each chapter may differ. "If there's a local chapter where you are, to join you do have to be accepted, but there's no initiation or anything. You don't even have to be a Satanist, you can just be a strong ally who believes in the political and secular actions without being super stoked about all the aesthetic aspects."[78] Membership is subject to renewal, revocation, or termination "for a member's failure to conduct him or herself in a manner consistent with the spirit of The Satanic Temple and its tenets."[77]

Chapters

The Temple has chapters across the United States, as well as one in Ottawa, Canada. Chapters operate as semi-autonomous grassroots groups supervised by the Satanic Temple National Council.

The first chapter was established in Detroit, Michigan in 2014. The chapter went on hiatus in 2018. Also in 2018, chapters in Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles, California, and the UK seceded from the Satanic Temple over internal disputes with national leadership.

Comparison to LaVeyan Satanism

Lucien Greaves has described the Temple as being a progressive and updated version of LaVey's Satanism.[79] The Temple sees itself as separate and distinct from LaVeyan Satanists, and feels that its principles and tenets represent "a natural evolution in Satanic thought". Greaves has said that the elements of Social Darwinism and Nietzscheanism within LaVeyan Satanism are incongruent with game theory, reciprocal altruism, and cognitive science.[80] He has also criticized the Church of Satan for its lack of political lobbying and what he sees as their exclusivity, referring to them as autocratic and hierarchical, and saying that the Church fetishizes authoritarianism.[12][51] Conversely, the Church of Satan has made statements claiming that The Satanic Temple are only "masquerading as Satanists"[81] and do not represent Satanism.[82]

Reception

The Satanic Temple has received some criticism for their actions, most notably from religious organizations and figures.[83] Many critics state that they believe that the Temple is not a serious organization and is instead meant to be a prank, form of satire, or elaborate trolling attempt. Greaves and Blackmore have both dismissed these claims, as Greaves stated in a 2013 interview with *Vice* that the Temple could be both satanic and satirical.[12] Blackmore has also stated that people believe that they are only "trying to cause trouble for no reason except to just be shocking", but the Temple says they are "adding to the dialogue that's already there and asking for rights -- just like anyone else."[84]

Both Greaves and Blackmore have stated that they have received death threats in response to their activities with The Satanic Temple.[84][85]

The temple has generated positive attention as well. Valerie Tarico of *Salon* wrote that the tenets were egalitarian and "truer to the words of Jesus than most Christians," referring to the tenets as expressing the primacy of compassion and empathy and conducive to a path to equanimity.[86] This sentiment was echoed by Progressive Secular Humanist blogger Michael Stone who compared the tenets as superior to the Ten Commandments, claiming the tenets offer "a more moral, and more optimistic stance, emphasizing positive, pro-social values."[21]

See also

- Abortion-rights movements
- Campaigns against corporal punishment
- Christian privilege
- Church of the SubGenius
- Creation and evolution in public education
- Criticism of religion
- Culture jamming
- Flying Spaghetti Monster
- Freedom From Religion Foundation
- *Hail Satan?* (2019) documentary film
- LGBT social movements
- Parody religion
- Performance art
- Religious satire
- School prayer

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External links

- Official website (https://thesatanictemple.com/)
- "The Satanic Temple gets religion" (https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-05-06/satanic-temple-gets-religious) on PRI's *The World* (2019 May 6)
- Satanic Temple TV (https://thesatanictemple.tv) media platform

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